

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	20 December 2023
Executive Member:	Councillor Denise Ward, Climate Emergency and Environmental Services
Reporting Officer:	Emma Varnam, Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhood Services
Subject:	HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE POLICY AMENDMENTS
Report Summary:	<p>The report proposes amendments to the implementation date for the hackney carriage and private hire age and emissions standards for existing Tameside licensed vehicles, which were proposed as part of the Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards project and adopted by Council on 7 December 2021.</p> <p>It is proposed that that the compliance date is extended from 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2025.</p>
Recommendations:	<p>That the Council approve the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extend the current emissions compliance date for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles to 31 December 2025. 2. Delay the implementation of the maximum age limit for non-wheelchair accessible Private Hire Vehicles to 31 December 2025.
Corporate Plan:	The proposals contained in this report will support the delivery of the Corporate Plan by ensuring there is a modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment.
Policy Implications:	The proposed amendments would replace the existing requirements in relation to the Age and Emission sections detailed in the existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	<p>There are no direct financial implications arising from these recommendations. The taxi licensing service, within Public Protection, is funded through a mixture of revenue budget and fee income charged for issue and renewal of licenses, which are based on a full cost recovery model.</p> <p>The 23/24 income target for taxi licenses is £0.363m which is expected to be fully delivered.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The recommendations support the council's minimum licensing standards for Taxi and Private Hire services which in turn supports the council in delivering its statutory duties.
Risk Management:	If the recommendations are not implemented a significant proportion of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle fleet will be unable to renew their licences from 1 April 2024.
Access to Information:	Not Confidential

Background Information: The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Sharon Smith, Head of Public Protection.



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 There are 912 licensed drivers, 621 private vehicle licenses, 130 hackney carriage (Taxi) licenses and 23 vehicle operators in Tameside. An efficient and safe taxi service has a significant contribution to the well-being and economy of Tameside. Minimum Licensing Standards for Greater Manchester raises the profile of the service across the region and aims to encourage the trust and appreciation of Greater Manchester registered taxis.
- 1.2 In 2018, Greater Manchester's ten local authorities agreed to collectively develop a common set of minimum licensing standards for Taxi and Private Hire services that covered the whole of Greater Manchester. At that time, the primary driver for this work was to improve public safety, but vehicle age and emission standards in the context of the Clean Air Plan also became major considerations.
- 1.3 Minimum Licensing Standards cover four broad areas:
 - Drivers,
 - Vehicles,
 - Operators, and
 - Local Authorities.
- 1.4 In 2021 due to the complexity and breadth of the work it was agreed to separate the implementation of the standards into two stages; Stage 1 (Drivers, Operators and Local Authority) and Stage 2 (Vehicles).
- 1.5 The Council adopted Stage 1 of the Minimum Licensing Standards at Full Council on 5 October 2021.
- 1.6 Stage 2 was approved on 7 December 2021, as a result these standards became the Council's Policy.
- 1.7 At present, these standards are still not fully adopted or implemented across Greater Manchester. Only seven districts (including Tameside) have fully adopted Stage 2.
- 1.8 Shortly after the Minimum Licensing Standards policy positions were initially agreed across Greater Manchester, the Department for Transport issued proposed Best Practice Guidance for Taxi and Private Hire licensing and ran a consultation from March – June 2022. Elements of this draft guidance departed significantly from the Minimum Licensing Standards that had been initially agreed across Greater Manchester, namely the vehicle age and private hire sticker policies. The Department for Transport is yet to respond to that consultation and has not committed to a timetable for issuing the final guidance.
- 1.9 With the ever-changing industry, continued licence shopping impacting many licensing authorities, and without final completion of Stage 1 & 2 of the Minimum Licensing Standards project being achieved some Greater Manchester districts have already felt compelled to review their position and depart from policies they had previously approved. Consequently, the Minimum Licensing Standards project is currently under full review, largely due to the further delay of the Clean Air Plan, which has in turn delayed access to Clean Taxi Fund.
- 1.10 Another major factor in the requirement to review policies is the growth of licence holders seeking to obtain licence from out of area Licensing Authorities. One example of this is Wolverhampton City Council who at 1 April 2023, licensed over 30,000 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers. In the previous year, Wolverhampton City Council licensed 19,560 drivers. A large proportion of these drivers are working within Tameside and the wider Greater Manchester region. Licensing Authorities can only take enforcement action against their own licensees, they have no control over vehicles and drivers operating in their district which are licensed by out of area Licensing Authorities.

- 1.11 The aim of the Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards is to bring consistency across all ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities. However, in the absence of government legislation to address the impact of out of area working and licence shopping, it is no longer feasible to maintain certain policy positions.

2. EMISSIONS POLICY

- 2.1 The current policy in relation to vehicle emissions states:
- All new to licence vehicles to be emissions compliant.
 - For existing licensed vehicles – to begin transitioning as soon as the policy is in place and to complete transitioning by 1 April 2024.
- 2.2 The original date of compliance by 1 April 2024 for existing fleets was proposed in anticipation of the Clean Taxi Fund being opened in February 2022. This fund would allow vehicle proprietors to apply for funding which would subsidise the cost of upgrading to a compliant vehicle.
- 2.3 The Clean Air Plan was paused in February 2022 and a revised plan is yet to be agreed with government. As such, there is no clarity on if, and when any funding provision will be available to the trade as part of a revised Clean Air Plan, but is unlikely that any funding scheme will be available in 2023.
- 2.4 In February 2023 data produced by Transport for Greater Manchester showed that in Tameside, 67% (89 out of 133) of the Hackney Carriage fleet and 18% (111 out of 630) of the Private Hire fleet, were not compliant with the emission standards.
- 2.5 Therefore, without a change to the compliance date for these standards in Tameside, a significant proportion of the fleet will be unable to renew their vehicle licences from April 2024.
- 2.6 **Recommendation** – That the date requiring existing licensed vehicles to be emissions compliant, be extended to 31 December 2025.

3. AGE POLICY

- 3.1 The current age policies in Tameside are:
- Private Hire Vehicle – under 5 years on to fleet and 10 years off.
 - Wheelchair Accessible Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle – under 7 years on to fleet and 15 years off.
- 3.2 Prior to the approval of Stage 2 of the Minimum Licensing Standards in October 2021, the maximum age limit for non-wheelchair accessible Private Hire Vehicles was 12 years. The amendment in 2021 allowed for a transitional period for existing vehicles to comply until 1 April 2024 and continue to renew licences of vehicles until they reach 12 years of age, until 1 April 2024.
- 3.3 **Recommendation** – That Private Hire Vehicles which are not wheelchair accessible be allowed to stay on the fleet until they reach 12 years of age, until 31 December 2025.

4. FURTHER PROPOSED POLICY AMENDMENTS

- 4.1 The Licensing Department have received representations from trade representatives seeking amendments to other policy areas which include:

- Remove minimum age limit for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles,
- Vehicle livery,
- Written Off Vehicles,
- Topographical test for new drivers,
- Driving proficiency tests for new drivers,
- Removal of the requirement for first aid kit in Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles,
- Front plates from Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles,
- Allow advertisements to be displayed on all types of Hackney Carriage Vehicles.

4.2 A further report will be brought before Members to provide further detail on the proposals and consultation which will take place with the trade, members of the public and elected members.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards project is ongoing and further amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy will be brought before the Council for consideration.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 As set out at the front of the report.